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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000347

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BNEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)
SUBJECT: MIDLANDS GOVERNOR ON ELECTIONS

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires, a.i. for reason 1.4 b/d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On February 22, ZANU-PF Midlands Governor Cephas Msipa told the Ambassador that this year,s elections would be less violent than past elections. He predicted the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) would retain only one or two of its five seats in the province. Responding to the Governor,s question about Zimbabwe,s classification as an &outpost of tyranny8, the Ambassador said that given its past of an independent judiciary and racial tolerance, Zimbabwe should aim for the highest standards. Msipa said Zimbabwe had always been a one-party state and defended the GOZ noting the situation today was in fact better than it had ever been before. End Summary.

ELECTIONS

[1](#)2. (C) Governor Msipa said the ruling ZANU-PF party was serious about conducting a non-violent election. He cited the recent arrests of violent ZANU-PF youths as proof. He also predicted that ZANU-PF would win all but one or two of Midlands, 16 parliamentary seats. (N.B. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) currently holds five Parliament seats in Midlands). He argues that with a one-party state again after the elections, the government would again feel secure and could concentrate on other issues. The Ambassador countered that the problem was the GOZ,s unwillingness to accept a competitive political environment.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador asked Msipa why he was so confident that ZANU-PF would win big in the province. Msipa responded that Midlands was a largely rural area and that it was ZANU-PF that was feeding the people in rural areas. Moreover, ZANU-PF had close ties to local chiefs, whose position it had done much to improve, and the chiefs carried great influence with rural voters. The MDC, by contrast, had no message for rural people and he would be surprised if they even tried to campaign in those areas. The Ambassador noted that ZANU-PF also had many advantages as the ruling party. Msipa conceded the point, admitting that the electoral playing field was not level.

[1](#)4. (C) Msipa raised the Secretary,s criticism of Zimbabwe as an outpost of tyranny. He said he thought Zimbabwe,s political climate was better than that of most African countries. The Ambassador responded that Zimbabwe should hold itself to a higher standard than other African states. POSA, AIPPA, and the NGO Bill stood in stark contrast to Zimbabwe,s history of an outstanding judiciary and racial tolerance. Msipa disagreed, claiming that Zimbabwe was freer today than in the 1980s, when ethnic tension between the Shona and Ndebele dominated the nations politics. He added that the West was actually undermining the MDC with its support since most Zimbabweans were suspicious of the West,s motives.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

[1](#)5. (C) Governor Msipa said Midlands had gone 8 weeks without rain. He estimated that nearly 500,000 people in his province would require food assistance. Farmers with no crops of their own were buying 100 20kg bags of maize meal each day from his farm. However, the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) had stocks of grain and would be providing assistance to the province. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. stood ready to assist with food aid pending permission from the GOZ. Msipa replied that he would approve it immediately if he had the power to do so.

[1](#)6. (C) Msipa blamed Zimbabwe,s current economic ills on Western sanctions. The Ambassador responded that this was a convenient excuse, but in fact bad economic policy had led to Zimbabwe,s dramatic decline.

COMMENT

[1](#)7. (C) A relatively independent ZANU-PF politician, Governor Msipa was uncharacteristically frank about the need for food

assistance. No other ZANU-PF interlocutor has been as forthcoming about the need for food assistance. Most have denied there is any problem at all. A handful have gone so far as to admit a problem but have argued that the GOZ has the resources to address it. Frankly, we doubt it. Recent trips by the Ambassador and other Embassy officials to most areas of the country have revealed stunted crops with the April harvest only weeks away.

18. (C) BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: Msipa is part Shona and part Ndebele. In 1981, he became Deputy Minister of Manpower Planning and then Minister of Water Resources and Development. From 1985-1995, he headed several parastatals including the GMB and the Cotton Marketing Board. In 1995, he returned to government as the Minister for Indigenization. In 2000, he was appointed Governor of Midlands. He has two sons in the U.S., one studying at Tufts University and the other managing the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe,s (RBZ) Homelink program, through which the Zimbabwean diaspora can send remittances home to relatives, but in hard currency, through official channels, and converted to zimdollars at the GOZ,s bogus official rate.
SCHULTZ